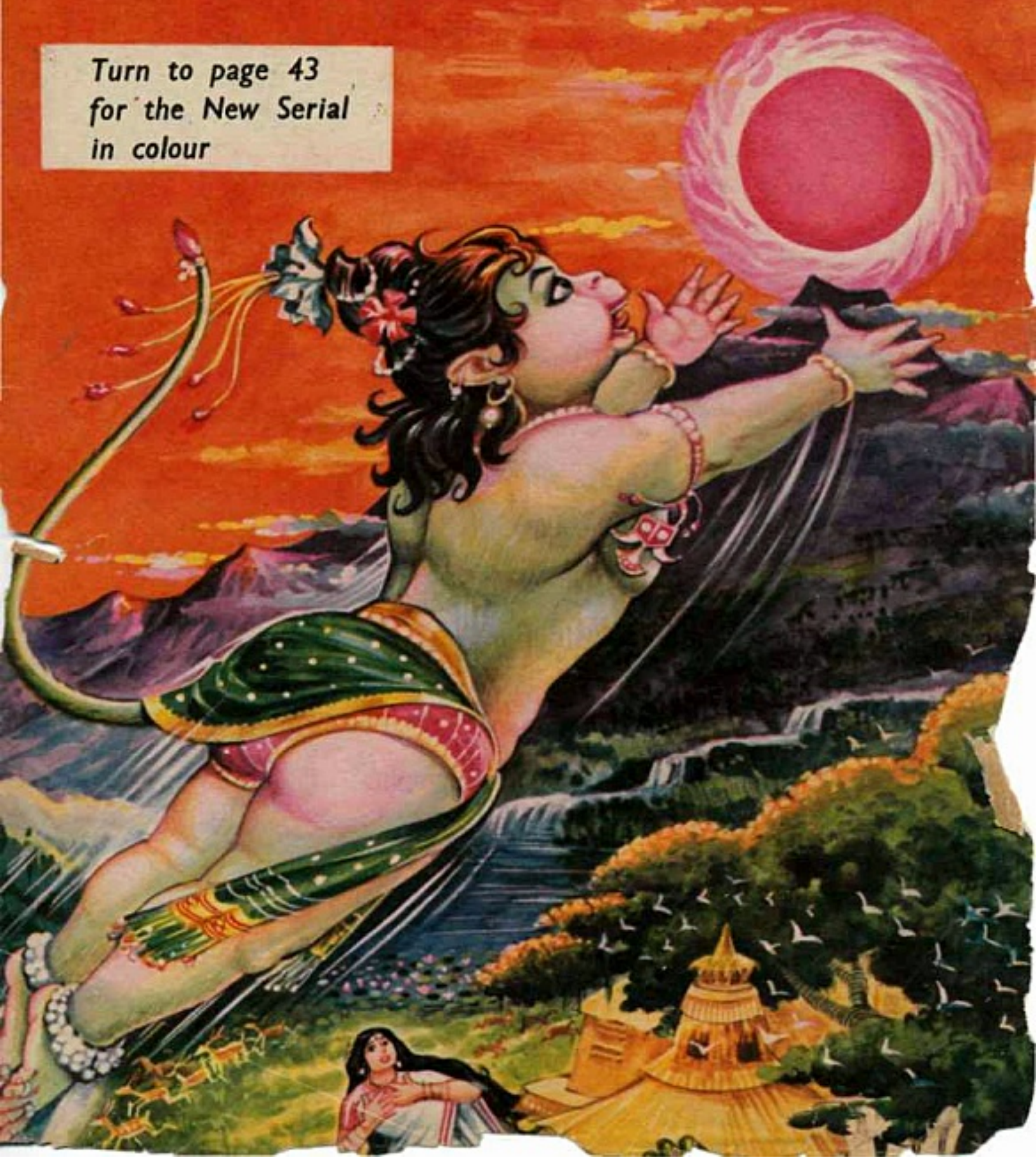


CHANDAMAMA

FEBRUARY 1975

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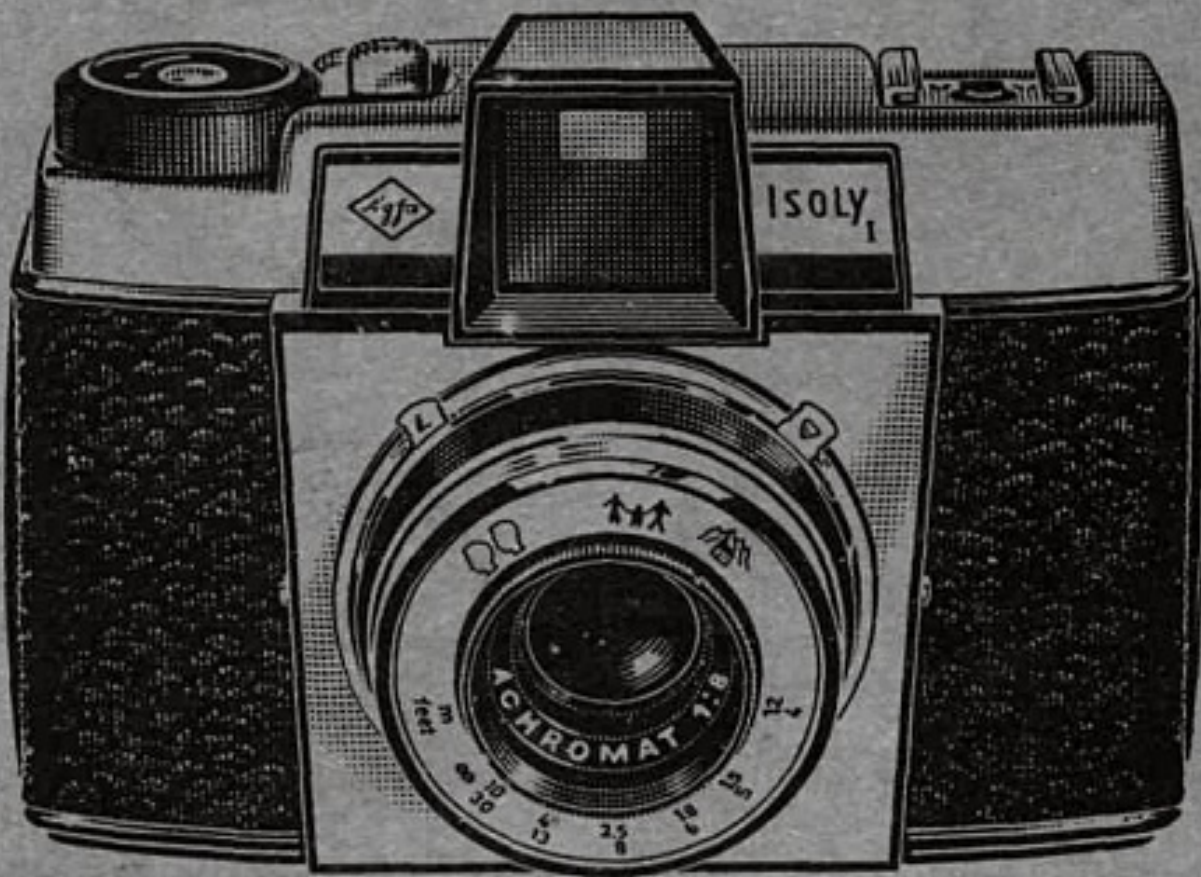
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No. 8

"Lord! Grant that as long as the people of the earth continue to remember you, I remain alive!"

This was Hanuman's prayer to his master, Rama. In other words, his only joy of living was listening to the chanting of Rama's name. Since there are innumerable people in India and abroad who worship Rama and remember him with love and devotion, Hanuman is believed to be still alive. Indeed, wherever Rama is worshipped sincerely, Hanuman is supposed to be present there, invisibly though, ever thrilled at his master's name.

Beginning from this issue, we are happy to share with you the story of Hanuman, his colourful life and exciting adventures, culled from Puranas and epics.

Who was this Hanuman? He is often mentioned as the Monkey-God. Was he really a kind of monkey? It is difficult to answer this question. Some scholars believe that he belonged to an extinct race who combined in them the strength of giants with the noblest traits of the human beings. Their physical features resembled the monkeys to a certain degree; that is all.

However, our life is not made up of physical facts alone. Our dreams and visions too have their reality. To millions of people, through the ages, Hanuman is the symbol of simplicity supported by courage, devotion supported by action, patience supported by vision, and humility supported by determination.

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WISH FULFILLED

Rajan and Roopnath were two brothers. Rajan, the elder brother, was selfish and greedy while Roopnath was naïve and indifferent.

After their father's death, Rajan desired to keep all the property to himself. But the villagers did not allow him to do that. He was obliged to allow Roopnath to occupy a small portion of the house.

Roopnath had to labour hard to feed his wife and children. But Rajan took to money-lending. He realised heavy interest from the borrowers and lived luxuriously.

Roopnath was always in want. He had to often borrow from Rajan. But as he could

not repay the debts, Rajan took over the portion of their ancestral house which he occupied. Roopnath went to live in a small hut.

Roopnath once went to work at a distant village. Unable to return at night, he slept in the outskirts of a forest and resumed walking towards home when it was dawn. Soon he reached the bank of a lake. Not far from the bank was a golden lotus bud, tossing in the soft breeze. As he stood there marvelling at the wonderful bud, the sun rose and at that the bud bloomed into a magnificent flower.

Roopnath could not check his temptation to possess the

flower. But no sooner had he plucked it than his eyes dazzled and a luminous feminine figure appeared before him.

Roopnath greeted the figure with folded hands. She said, "I am the deity of this forest. Every morning a lotus blooms for me in this lake. The one you plucked was meant for me. Surrender it to me and I will be pleased to grant you a boon."

Roopnath said repentantly, "Pardon me for my foolish deed, O deity of the forest, and kindly accept the lotus from me."

The deity accepted the lotus and said, "I am pleased with you. Ask me for a boon and it will be granted!"

Roopnath thought for a while and then said, "O deity! You know what pains a poor man. That is lack of happiness. Grant me that none in my family would ever be unhappy!"

The deity smiled and replied, "You are a clever man. All want happiness. But they ask for something which they imagine will make them happy. When it does not, they feel disappointed. You are lucky. I grant you happiness." The deity disappeared.

Roopnath returned home, a



contented man. Soon remarkable changes were marked in his household. Whatever he earned proved more than sufficient for his family. His wife and children never grumbled on account of anything. Soon he succeeded in repaying all his debts and built a small house for himself.

Rajan was surprised at this. He thought that Roopnath had found some hidden property. But he knew that Roopnath would not hide anything when asked.

Rajan went to Roopnath and asked him, "Brother, how is it that you never come to me for



loans nowadays? What has brought about sudden change in your condition? Please tell me everything frankly.”

“I have nothing to hide from you. All I can say is we are happy with whatever we earn. We have no desire to be wealthy. That is all!” replied Roopnath.

“You are no doubt speaking truth, but not the whole of it. Tell me, how have you come to be so very happy?” asked Rajan again.

Roopnath told him everything about the lotus in the lake and his chance encounter with the deity of the forest.

Rajan was pleased and

excited. He returned home, all the while thinking about the boon he should ask of the goddess.

He hardly slept at night and started for the lake before it was dawn. Soon he found a lotus bud in the lake. It bloomed along with the sunrise. At once Rajan plucked it and held it tight in both his hands.

The deity of the forest appeared soon. But she did not look pleased. She knew that the fellow had plucked the lotus deliberately. However, she said, “The lotus is meant for me. Hand it over to me.”

Rajan laughed and said, "Well, I will give it to you if you grant me a boon, not otherwise!"

The deity looked disgusted. But she asked, "What is the boon you want?"

Rajan was ready with his reply. "Grant that whatever I think will become true!" he said.

"Let it be so," said the deity and disappeared with the flower.

Rajan's joy knew no bound. He at once said, "How wonderful it would be if the mango tree here could give me sweet ripe mangoes just now!" At once there were mangoes galore which he ate to his heart's content. Back at home he said, "I think I require a palace!" And indeed, there was a palace! He wished for luxurious dishes and they were immediately available to him.

In the evening Rajan's wife went to Roopnath's house to brag about their fortune. It was dark when she was returning home. Rajan who sat in his house idly looking on, saw her approaching him. But he could not recognise her in the darkness. For a moment he was chilled with a fear. The dark figure could be a ghost—he thought and stared at her.

His wife instantly became a ghost. "The ghost is perhaps coming to kill me," Rajan thought. Instantly the ghost pounced upon him and killed him.

This was the final outcome of the boon Rajan had got.

Rajan had no child. His palace and wealth were inherited by Roopnath.



A Sweeper Bridegroom for the Princess

Long long ago—when a great deal of courage was needed to travel into unknown lands—a young prince of Kalinga, Purushottamdev, set forth to see the wide country, riding a horse.

He trotted and galloped for days and weeks, leaving his city, Puri, far behind. He passed through villages and towns and rode along the rivers and across the hills. At last he arrived at the grand old city of Kanchi.

As soon as the King of Kanchi learned about the visit of the Prince of Kalinga, he came out to meet him and cordially offered him hospitality. Purushottamdev accepted the offer and stayed there as the royal guest.

The King of Kanchi had a beautiful daughter, Padmavati. Purushottamdev saw the princess on several occasions. Her beauty and conduct charmed him. He would have liked to pass a longer time at Kanchi so that he could avail of the company of the princess from time to time. But news reached him soon that his father, the King of Kalinga, had fallen sick. He had to rush back to Puri.

The old king died and Purushottamdev ascended the throne. After he had observed the funereal rites for his father and after the festival in connection with his coronation was over, he sent a messenger to Kanchi, proposing to marry Princess Padmavati.

The King of Kanchi received the message with joy. In order to finalise the arrangements for the proposed marriage he immediately sent one of his ministers to Puri.

It was the time of the famous Car Festival of Lord Jagannath when the minister arrived at Puri. Tens of thousands of men and women came from all parts of India to witness Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra and their sister Subhadra seated in their magnificent chariots, drawn by innumerable devotees.

Such was the ancient custom that before the chariots were drawn, a portion of the road on which the chariots would run was swept clean by the King of Kalinga himself. The custom signified that the mighty king was after all an humble servant of the deities.



Unfortunately, the Kanchi minister could not appreciate the custom. He returned to his king and told him that it would be undignified to marry Princess Padmavati off to a sweeper king! The King of Kanchi agreed with his minister's observation.

Purushottamdev got furious when the news reached him. He decided to invade Kanchi and take the princess by force.

Accordingly he led his army to Kanchi, but was badly defeated in the battle.

Doubly humiliated, he retreated to Puri. He prostrated himself before the deities inside the great temple and wept and prayed for days together. At last a voice directed him to organise the expedition against Kanchi once more.



Purushottamdev lost no time in reorganising his army. One bright morning he started for Kanchi.

But he had some doubts in his mind. Was the voice he heard really Lord's? How will Lord Jagannath help him to win a victory? He reflected on these issues as he galloped forward, ahead of his army.

On the bank of the Lake Chilika, he was stopped by an old woman selling curd.

"Look here, young man," said the woman who did not know whom he was talking to, "A little while ago, two riders, one white and one black, drank two cups of curds from me. When I asked them for money, they gave me this ring and said that they were in a hurry to

reach Kanchi and that the young man who would follow would give the money if I showed this ring to him. I suppose you are that young man."

The woman handed over the ring to the king. The surprised king soon recognised it. It was the diamond ring of Lord Jagannath!

He realised that the two riders were Jagannath and Balabhadra, black being the colour of the former and white being the colour of the latter. The Lords obviously wanted to convince the king that he had nothing to fear, for, they were with him!

Purushottamdev's eyes were flooded with tears of gratitude. In honour of the woman, whose name as Manika, he named the place as Manikapatna, by which name it is known to this day.

Needless to say, Purushottamdev emerged victorious in the battle at Kanchi. The King of Kanchi was his prisoner. Purushottamdev, however, treated the king respectfully and released him. Neither did he try to annex Kanchi to his empire. But he did not spare Padmavati. He returned to Puri with the captive princess.



All expected that the king would marry the princess. But he gave a most disturbing order to his old minister: "Find out a sweeper to marry the princess!" Indeed, a victory was not enough for him to forget the insult.

In a lonely apartment of the palace at Puri waited the sad princess—for the day when she would be handed over to a sweeper.

A few months passed. It was again the time for the Car Festival. Surrounded by a number of visiting kings, the nobility, the priests, and multitudes of people, King Purushottamdev stooped to sweep the road, a broom-stick of gold in his grip.

Just then an affectionate hand touched his shoulders. He straightened himself and looked back. He saw his old minister

smiling at him. Next moment, at the minister's signal, a veiled young lady garlanded him.

"What is this?" asked the bewildered king.

"My lord, you had ordered me to find out a sweeper for Princess Padmavati to marry. Are you not a sweeper at the moment? Where on earth could I get a more eligible sweeper for Padmavati, a goddess among the princesses?"

The young king blushed. At his wise minister's bidding, he too garlanded Padmavati. The crowd cheered the wonderful event and the people were all praise for the minister.

Thus Padmavati became the queen of Kalinga—a very worthy queen of a great king. Kanchi and Kalinga became two friendly lands and remained so for a long time.





GOLD GALORE AT CHEAP

Prof. Manoj Das

In the city of Malyapur lived an honest man, Ramdas by name. All on a sudden his wife died, leaving two infant sons. There was nobody in his family to take charge of the boys. So Ramdas decided to leave them at their maternal uncle's house, which was at a distance of several days walk from Malyapur.

Before he set out with his sons, Ramdas deposited his wife's precious ornaments and all his money with his rich

neighbour, Saitansingh, saying, "Brother, this is all I have for the future of my sons. So, please keep them safely."

"Be sure," Saitansingh assured him, "They will be as safe as the sun in the sky."

But Saitansingh proved a perfect liar. Fabulously rich though he was, he was ever more greedy. When Ramdas returned to Malyapur after a few months and wanted his wealth back, Saitansingh handed over to him a box

full of counterfeit ornaments and coins in place of his real ones. Ramdas soon found out how brutally deceived he had been. He was a heart-broken man. He returned to his sons, told them of Saitansingh's treachery and died some days later.

The two sons were well looked after at their uncle's house. They grew up as bright young men. They traded in gold and prospered well. But they never forgot Saitansingh's mischief. After they had accumulated enough money, they set out to execute their plan of revenge.

The elder brother grew long hair and a beard and disguised as a mendicant, went and lived inside a deserted temple on the river at the outskirts of Malyapur. The younger brother dressed up as a prince and with a number of servants went to live in a hired house opposite Saitansingh's.

The 'prince' did not fail to attract Saitansingh's attention. Saitansingh thought, "I see this young man scattering money in the town as a farmer scatters seeds on his fields. Instead of a paisa, he gives a rupee to a beggar. No evening passes without a famous musician singing before him and returning

with a handsome reward. What a pity that money which should be laid to perpetual rest in the iron chest is being thus thrown away at beggars and singers!"

Saitansingh soon befriended the 'prince' and waited for a chance to profit by him. A few days passed. One night the 'prince' raised a cry, "Thief, thief!" At that the neighbours came running. The 'prince' told them how a couple of thieves had entered his bedroom and how they were about to lay their hands on his caskets full of gold when he luckily woke up and raised the cry and they escaped.

Saitansingh did not allow this opportunity to slip by. He proposed, after the neighbours had



left, "Prince, it is not safe for you to live in this house. My house is like a castle. Please come and live as my guest. Your wealth will be safe there."

The 'prince' thanked him profusely and accepted the proposal. Caskets numbering a dozen supposed to be loaded with gold were carried to Saitansingh's house. The prince put up in a big room, amidst his gold.

Saitansingh's happiness was great at the sight of the prince's wealth, which was now within his reach. At the same time his eagerness to own the wealth was heightened. He lived in a constant tension and hardly slept a wink.

Soon after his coming over to Saitansingh's house the 'prince' fell sick. For days together he did not touch any food. One morning he called Saitansingh to his bedside and said, "My days are numbered. I have been instructed in my dream to make a gift of all my wealth to a certain mendicant who lives in a deserted temple on the riverbank. My noble host! Will you kindly go and beg him to come here?"

Saitansingh had already heard much about the 'mendicant' who stood on one leg

during sunrise and sunset and who was so generous that he distributed whatever offerings he received from the devotees to the people around him.

Saitansingh hurried to the 'mendicant' and told him everything. The 'mendicant' said, "I have no objection to fulfil the last wish of a man. But the problem is, I do not know the value of gold. Besides this deserted temple is not the right place to keep gold."

"Do not worry," said Saitansingh, "I know well the value of gold. I will sell them, on behalf of you, when the need will arise. So far as their safety is concerned, I am prepared to keep them with me and I will feel honoured if you too come and stay with me!"

The 'mendicant' agreed to the proposal and went to Saitansingh's house and accepted the wealth from the dying 'prince' and blessed him.

But lo and behold! Great was the power of his blessing. For, far from dying, the 'prince' recovered at an awful speed and along with the 'mendicant' began to eat all the best things in the world at Saitansingh's expense.

Then the 'prince' prepared to leave for his country and requested the 'mendicant' to accompany him. The 'mendicant' was quite willing to oblige him, but how could he go before he had disposed of all his gold?

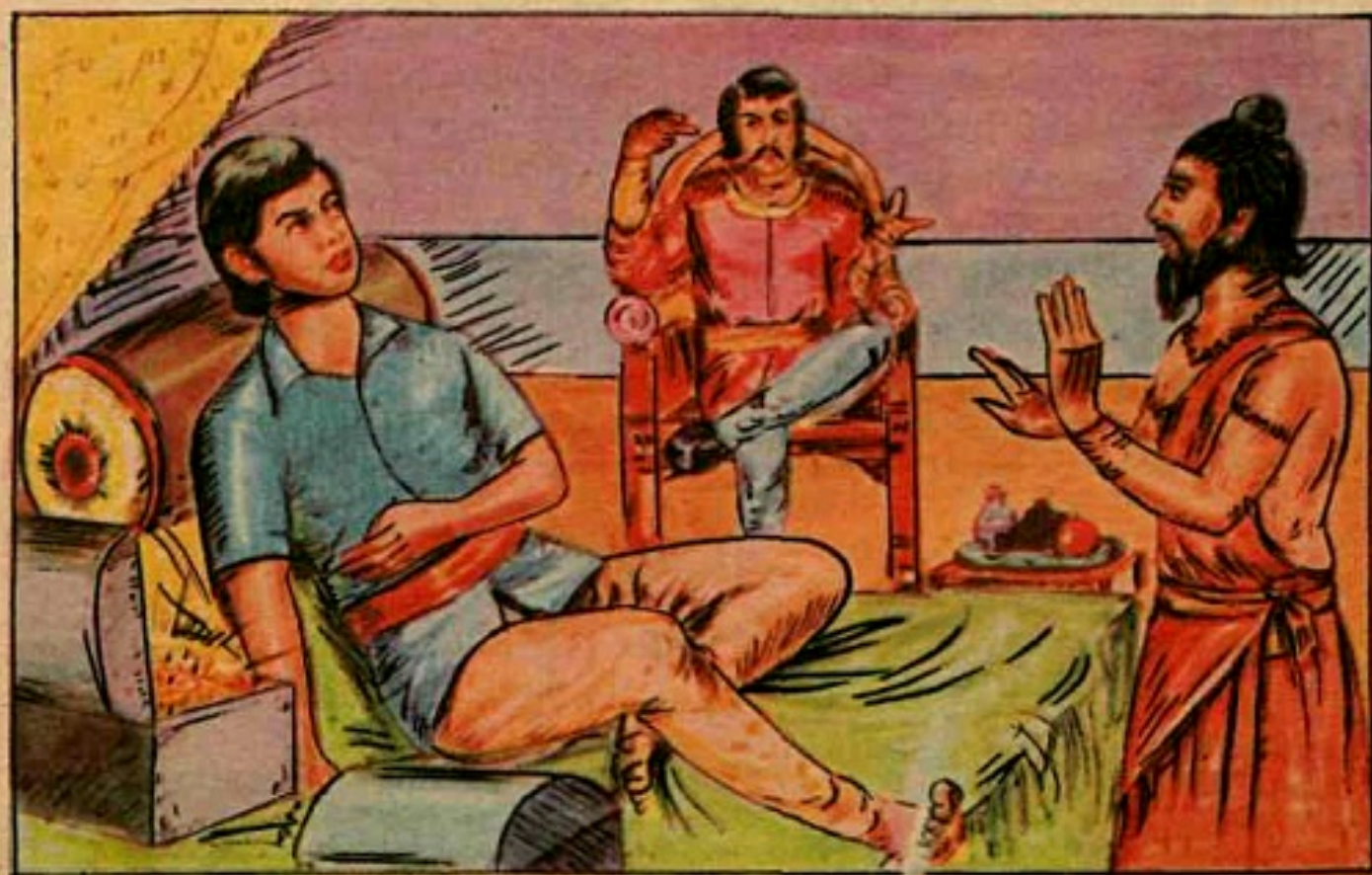
Saitansingh came to his rescue. He proposed, "It will be a time-consuming affair to bargain with the gold-merchants. Since you are in a hurry, I will buy them up." The 'mendicant' was pleased.

Saitansingh's joy knew no bound. For he paid to the 'mendicant' less than one-fourth of the real price of the gold.

Even then he had to pay several lakhs of rupees, for it was a huge quantity.

A few days after the 'prince' and the 'mendicant' had taken leave of Saitansingh, he carried a piece of his newly acquired gold to a goldsmith who examined it and to his great shock declared that it was no gold at all. Saitansingh soon learnt that what he had purchased for lakhs of rupees was not worth a handful of coins!

He ran to the king and reported the matter to him and, in tears, prayed for his intervention. The king at once sent his officers in search of the two





young men. They were still in the city and they came to the king's court most willingly.

The trial began. The prince said, "I did not sell my wealth to anybody. I made a gift of it to the mendicant and got cured by his blessing. Since then the wealth has been his. I have nothing to do in the matter."

And said the 'mendicant', "I had from the very beginning warned Saitansingh that to me gold and pebbles were the same. I had no knowledge of the value

of gold. It is he who proposed to buy them up from me and it is he who fixed the price. Whatever money he gave me, I distributed that among the poor as was my habit!"

The king found that none could be held responsible for Saitansingh's misfortune. He let the 'prince' and the 'mendicant' go.

People could hear Saitansingh wailing for many days, confined to his house. Nobody ever saw him thereafter.





A BRIDE INSIDE A CASKET

At the outskirts of a certain town there was an old temple. Merchants and rich people of the town often came there to worship the deity, bringing with them offerings of fruits, sweetmeats and money.

A clever young man, dressed up as a mendicant, occupied one of the empty rooms adjacent to the temple. In full view of the visitors he pretended to sit in meditation. Moreover, he never spoke. This very soon

earned him the fame of a genuine ascetic and by and by it became a custom for the visitors to look him up after they had seen the deity. They bowed to him and placed before him presents of food and money. The false mendicant smiled at them benignly and patted them on their head or back in a gesture of blessing them.

He flourished well. With the money the visitors offered him he built a small double-storeyed



house within the temple precinct and lived rather luxuriously. He had at his command about half a dozen good-for-nothing fellows who had enrolled themselves as his disciples.

One day a rich merchant of the town came to visit the temple. He was accompanied by his wife and daughter. As they sat in front of the deity, their hands folded in devotion, waiting for the priest to give them flowers and *prasad*, the false mendicant watched them from his apartment in the upper floor. The merchant's daughter was very beautiful and the mendicant wanted to have her for his wife. He had the mer-

chant called to his presence and received him with some sweet words.

The merchant was surprised at this, for he knew that the mendicant never spoke. His doubts were resolved by the mendicant himself who said, "Gentleman, you know that I don't care to talk to mortals. It is out of sheer compassion for you that I decided to break my sacred vow. I have, naturally, the power to look into the future. I am sorry to say that I can see a great misfortune waiting to befall you."

The merchant was shocked. "My ship is abroad in the sea. I have spent all my wealth and

laden it with valuable merchandise. My luck depends on the ship's safe return after selling the goods at a profit," the merchant mumbled.

"Precisely," said the mendicant. "And for your information, your ship is about to face a violent typhoon. I am, of course, doing everything in my power to save the ship from any disaster. But for how long can I battle against an ill luck the very cause of which is nurtured by yourself?"

The merchant fell at the mendicant's feet and cried, "I have heard that you are a great soul. Please do something to root out the cause of my ill luck."

"You alone can do that. I can, however, guide you with my advice. Listen now. Do not lose heart. The cause of your ill luck is your daughter. No power either of earth or of heaven can come to your rescue as long as she is with you. You must give her up without any delay," said the mendicant.

The perplexed merchant asked, "But how can I do that?"

"It is quite easy," answered the mendicant, "Put her in a casket, close it and float it on the river! Do it tonight itself and do not forget to place a lamp on the casket."

The merchant nodded his



head vehemently and said, "I cannot do away with my child like that. It is worse than losing my ship."

The mendicant smiled benignly and patted the merchant, and said, "You little man, don't I see your daughter's future too in the mirror of my finger-nails? It is so ordained in her destiny that she will be rescued by a young man who will subsequently marry her. There would not be a better bridegroom than him in the whole land."

The merchant sighed with relief and agreed to abide by the advice and bowed to the mendicant again and took leave of him.

Although the merchant had no doubt about the bright future of his daughter, it was very painful for him to treat the daughter to some sedative and, when she was fast asleep, to lay her in a casket and then to float it on the river, with a lamp placed on it.

The mendicant, with a retinue of his trusted disciples, waited on the river-bank right from the sunset. When all was pitch dark and the jackals howled from the bushes announcing the approach of midnight, they

could see a faint flicker in the midstream. The mendicant was delighted. At his order a couple of disciples swum into the river and dragged the floating casket ashore.

It was with great difficulty that the mendicant suppressed his excitement at the smooth success of his plan. He could have straightaway proposed to the merchant for his daughter's hand in marriage. But he was not quite sure if the merchant would entertain the proposal and even if he did, if the daughter would like it. Now he had no doubt that while on one hand the merchant would be grateful to him for being saved from his ruin, the daughter would be grateful to him for being rescued from certain death.

At his instruction his disciples carried the casket to his bedchamber in the upper floor. Then he dismissed them and with an ecstatic trepidation of heart, removed the upper lid of the casket.

But no sooner had he done it than sharp came a slap on his face. Horrified, he tried to have a close look at what appeared like a monkey, but his eyes got a bloody scratch. And as

he covered his eyes with his hands, a savage bite took away a chunk of his bright nose.

He shrieked and ran out of his room, but not before the monkey had pulled his ear and planted the heaviest spank on his cheek. Then, through a window, it sprang onto a tree and disappeared.

The mendicant ran for his life, completely at a loss to understand how a beautiful girl could have changed into an ape. "She must have been a witch," he thought. He never returned to show his messy face to his disciples.

But one of his lies turned true. The merchant's daughter got the best bridegroom in the

land. It so happened that before the mendicant saw the casket, it had been seen by the prince of the land, who was returning by boat from a hunting expedition. Attracted by the lamp, he brought the casket aboard his boat and opened it and discovered the sleeping beauty. He had captured a ferocious monkey from the forest. He substituted the monkey for the girl and floated the casket again, without neglecting to place the lamp on it.

In due course the girl was produced before her father. The prince, on being told that she was destined to marry the man who rescued her, was only too glad to accept her as his wife, for she was so beautiful!





THE HYMN THAT SAVED

In a certain country horses were often stolen by some thieves. The king was obliged to instruct his judges to hang unto death whoever was found to have stolen a horse.

One night an astrologer, on his way to some distant place, took shelter in a villager's house. The villager's mare was about to give birth to her colt. The anxious villager and his son were sitting awake. Their guest, the astrologer, consulted his almanac and said, "Can't the delivery be delayed for some time?"

"That is impossible! But why do you say so?" asked the villager.

"This is not an auspicious moment at all. If the colt takes its birth now, it would endanger at least two men's lives in future!" explained the astrologer.

But the mare was delivered of the colt just as they were talking.

"What should I do now?" asked the villager.

"I don't know! However, I will inscribe a hymn on a thin plate of brass. Put the plate under the skin on the colt's forehead and apply this root so that the cut would heal up quickly," said the astrologer and handed over the brass plate and the root to the villager before leaving.

The villager did as advised.

Six years passed. The colt grew up to be a handsome horse. But one night it was stolen away. When the villager saw his stable empty in the morning, he told his son, "I must go out in search of our horse."

"You should not undertake it all by yourself. Let me accompany you," said the son.

The father tried to dissuade the son from accompanying him. But the son proved adamant. So, both went out.

While they were at the outskirts of a faraway village, there was a shower and they got drenched. As they plodded on, shivering with cold, they saw a man riding a horse and dragging another horse along with him.

The son gazed at the man and his two horses from some distance and told his father, "The extra horse dragged along by the rider is ours!"

"How can you be so very sure?" asked the father.

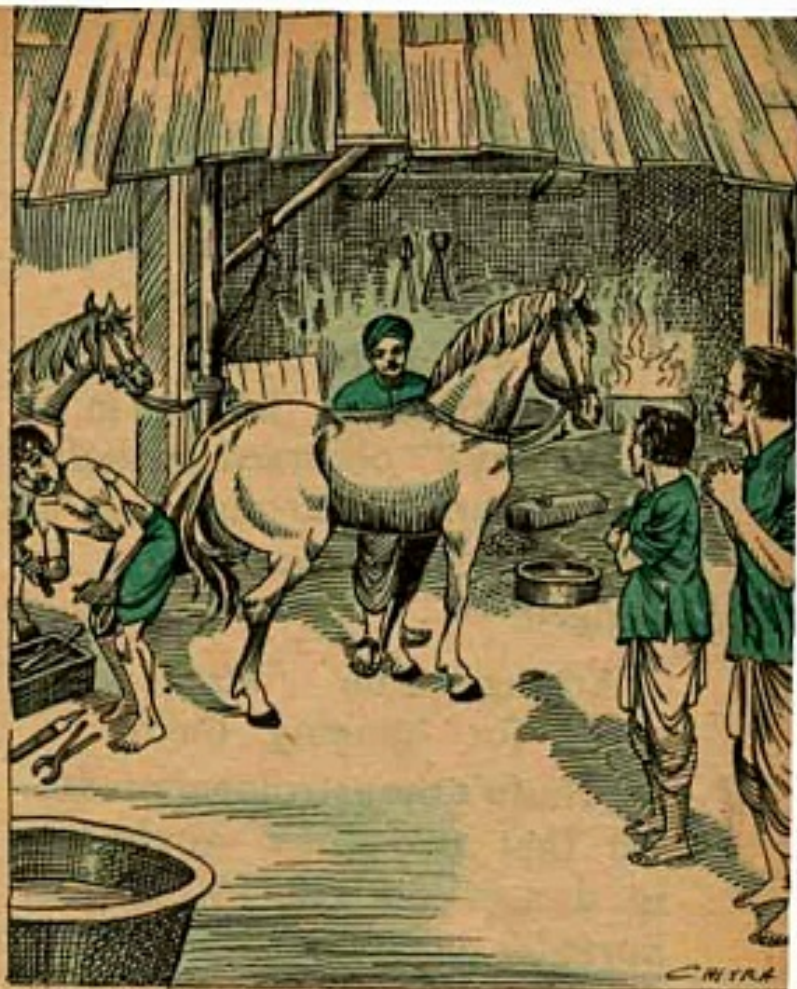
"I know its appearance and gait so well that I cannot make any mistake in this matter," asserted the son.

They saw the stranger with two horses entering a smith's workshop.

"Let us go in and have a close look at the horse," proposed the father.

Both entered the shop. The smith looked up at them while nailing a horse's hooves and said, "You are drenched. Why don't you come near the oven and warm up yourselves?"

Father and son went near the oven and had a quite close look at the horse.



"This is our horse, no doubt," the father told the son.

"Did I not say so?" whispered the son. The stranger heard them and asked angrily, "What are you discussing looking at my horse?"

"This is our horse. Someone stole it from our stable," said the father.

"What!" screamed the stranger, "Do you mean I am a thief? I know your motive. You want to take away the horse from me under a false plea. In other words, you are horse-thieves yourselves."

They went to the nearest judge. The stranger produced

a witness who testified the horse to be his. There was no witness to support the claim of the father and the son.

"So, you were trying to steal this gentleman's horse, in a novel way!" observed the judge and according to the law in force, ordered the two to be hanged.

Arrangements were soon made for hanging them.

"Hadn't the astrologer predicted that two lives would be in danger on account of this horse?" remembered the father.

"But how strange that the hymn which we had sealed under the colt's forehead was of no use!" lamented the son.

"Well, well!" exclaimed the father, "May be that the hymn will work now!"

When it was time for tighten-

ing the noose around their necks, the judge arrived there to give the order to the hangman.

The father then shouted, "Huzoor! We had sealed a small brass plate with a hymn inscribed on it under the skin of the colt's forehead. I believe it is still there."

At the judge's instruction the guards tore the skin open on the horse's forehead and lo! soon the plate was found intact!

The judge wasted no time in altering his judgement. The father and the son got back their horse. The real thief was hanged.

"The hymn had its effect—in its own way!" said the father happily and thanked the unknown astrologer.





TWO ASTROLOGERS

The King of Kumudpur had a great scholar in his court named Suguna Sharma. For his mastery over astrology and mathematics, he was hailed by all the scholars of the country. He had achieved wide fame and had gained much wealth. Several titles had been added to his name too.

Once Sharma thought: "Is there really no one who can excel me in astrology?" He decided to undertake a long tour in order to find out the answer to this question.

He travelled from city to city, from court to court and discussed with many a famed astrologer. But he was sad to find that most of them were shallow and some even snobs. Sharma

became pensive, for, he knew that such people only brought disrepute to the difficult science of astrology.

But as he moved from place to place, he heard about one astrologer again and again. He was Ram Shastri, the court astrologer of the King of Avanti. Sharma got curious to meet this famous scholar.

He soon reached the court of Avanti. He was received with great respect because his fame was not unknown to Shastri. Both the scholars were soon engaged in discussing high issues of astrology. To hear them was a feast and it appeared impossible to decide who between the two was more learned.

But a strong curiosity had got hold of the king and he was determined to find out who was greater. He consulted his prime minister privately and then asked the scholars, "Can you predict any significant event which might take place this evening here around our palace?"

Shastri, the court astrologer, quietly made some calculations, sat with his eyes closed for some time and then said, "My lord, soon after the sunset today, there will be a storm. When the storm would subside, you can see a big white fish lying just before the palace gate."

The king looked at Sharma, eager to hear his prediction. Sharma smiled and said, "It is sure that there will be a storm after sunset. It is also true that a big fish would be seen after the storm. But the fish would look black, not white. Besides, we can see it only at a distance of about twenty yards from the palace gate, not exactly in front of the gate."

Although the major events the two astrologers predicted were the same, there were, nevertheless, some points of difference. The king and the courtiers waited with great





eagerness to see who would prove totally right.

Rain started falling as soon as it was sunset. Soon there was a storm. It continued for more than an hour.

When the storm subsided the king and the courtiers went out of the palace, their breaths almost suspended, to discover the fish. It was not difficult to find it out. It was black and it lay about twenty yards away from the gate.

The king congratulated Sharma and said, "Till today I was under the impression that Ram Shastri was the greatest astrologer of all. But today I realised that you are greater than him."

Shastri looked pale. But Sharma immediately embraced him and then looking at the king, said, "My lord, pardon

me for telling you that your observation is not correct. I am in no way a greater scholar than Shastri. In fact, whatever Shastri said was correct to the last alphabet. The fish was really white. But it looked black because it was drowned in mud. It had also fallen just in front of the gate. But it had bounced off a few yards by itself. Shastri had not cared to add his imagination to his learning, while I had done so. That made all the difference!"

The king was amazed at the frankness of Sharma. He rewarded both the astrologers with a variety of gifts. While departing, Sharma told the king, "My lord, you should be proud of Shastri, who is not only a scholar but also a good and innocent man."

Man are strong only so long as they represent a strong idea.

—Sigmund Freud

Peaches For Health

KUNG-FU-TZE, better, known as Confucius, the Chinese philosopher and sage who lived in the 5th century B.C. is said to have worked out most of his problems while strolling through orchards of peach trees.

The Chinese adored the peach for its delicious taste and for the perfume of its pink blossoms which they believed had a magical power to protect them from evil spirits.

Peaches are native to the Orient and are raised in India in the northern hill stations. Peaches were introduced into Rome from Persia during the reign of the Emperor Claudius. Their Latin name, *Amygdalus persica*, means 'Almonds of Persia' and was given to them because of the bitter almond flavour of their kernels.

They rapidly became popular throughout the Mediterranean



Health & Beauty

LOOKING AT FRUITS

countries and Spanish explorers took peach stones to the New World and planted them in Mexico and Florida. Both white settlers and Red Indians cultivated the peach to such a large extent that by 1682 there was not even one plantation in America without peaches.

The fruit was known to England during the 16th century. Tudor *herbalists* thought highly of the peach and recommended eating the fruit for a good complexion and the leaves made into a syrup for coughs and sore throats.

Because their cultivation was confined to the warmer countries peaches remained a luxury for most people till recently. The small, bushy, fan-shaped trees are delicate and short-lived. They grow best in areas protected from frost for their flowers and fruit buds, which appear before the leaves are easily destroyed by a cold spring. The

fruit is juicy and round with a delicate yellowish red skin and a rough stone like seed. It is very perishable. Only with improvements in transport and refrigeration that it has been possible for peaches to be carried successfully to all countries of the world.

English peaches are among the best but being not enough to meet the demand. England import other varieties from Italy, Spain, France and South Africa.

There are two main types in peaches, the freestone and the clingstone. Both are excellent to eat and are valuable in the diet because they contain the A, B and C vitamins together with important minerals including calcium, phosphorus, iron, manganese, copper and chlorine.

The kernels are a source of Persic oil which is used in industry as a substitute for almond oil and in cosmetics.



THE TRUE STRENGTH

In days gone by there was a king named Dhanapal in a certain land. He believed that if he maintained a large army and accumulated a huge quantity of money, he was safe! Army and wealth would bring him stability and fame.

He taxed his people heavily. Half of the revenue was spent on the army while the other half was deposited in his treasury.

As his wealth went on increasing, he felt more and more happy. He did not spend a pie for the well-being of his subjects.

But Dhanapal had a minister who was an enlightened person. He tried his best to convince the king that the people were the country's true strength, not

the army or the treasure. So, the revenue should be spent for the people's welfare.

But the minister's advice did not please the king at all. One day he was so much disgusted with the grumbling minister that he ordered him to leave his kingdom. "If I see you tomorrow, you lose your head!" he shouted.

The minister immediately took to the road and entered a forest. Soon he was captured by a gang of dacoits.

The dacoits led him to their chief. The chief could recognise the minister and concluded that he had come to the forest in a bid to learn all about the gang. The chief was furious and he decided to kill the minister.

When the minister learnt what was in the chief's mind, he said, "The king ordered me to leave his kingdom and threatened that he would behead me if I did not. Now you too are anxious to kill me. I take that my death is certain. But I have one desire. If you can fulfil it, I will die in peace. You see, the king has accumulated heaps of money. If you can plunder his treasury and put the idle money to use, that would be something excellent."

The chief thought that it was yet another trick by the minister to lure them to the capital so that it would be easy for the

king's army to capture them. The dacoits always avoided the capital because they were afraid of the king's huge army.

However, the chief said, "We will do as you propose provided you stay with us all through the operation. If I feel that you are trying to trap us, I will instantly behead you. Do you agree to this?"

"I do!" said the minister. He explained to the chief that the king's soldiers were idlers. They had no practice of fighting.

At midnight the gang raided the royal treasury. It did not take long for the chief to understand that the soldiers were use-



less. Most of them were soundly asleep. Those who were awake were too nervous to offer any resistance.

The dacoits not only emptied the treasury, but also they took the king prisoner. They loaded their loot on their horses and prepared to leave.

"Live happily with this wealth. Give up the practice of dacoity. Now, let me go wherever I like," said the minister to the chief.

But the chief said, "Well, minister, now that I have imprisoned the king, I can very well occupy the throne myself; what do you say?"

"This is an excellent idea," replied the minister, "In that case why not deposit the wealth in the treasury again? As the new king you can enjoy it yourself!"

"Why not?" said the chief. At his order, his followers carried all the wealth back into the treasury. While the whole gang was inside the treasury, the clever minister suddenly locked up the iron doors.

Then the minister freed the king and told him, "My lord! Did you see how insecure you are in spite of your wealth and army? All your wealth could have vanished in a moment. What is the use of storing what could be used for the welfare of the people? If the people would love you, nobody can do you any harm."

The king realised the truth in what the wise minister said. He was a changed man. He devoted all his wealth and imagination for the good of his subjects.



FUN WITH SCIENCE

SEE-SAW CANDLE

Burning the candle at both ends can be fun. In fact, it makes a fascinating sight in a darkened room. For the candle will rise and dip rhythmically as it burns away. Here's how it's done:

Cut away the wax evenly from round the wick at the base of a candle. Then, warming one end of a metal knitting needle, push it through the centre of the candle's length. Now, spread newspaper over a table, and space two inverted tumblers on it so that the knitting needle 'spindle' will balance on the tumblers. You can see how to do it in our sketch.

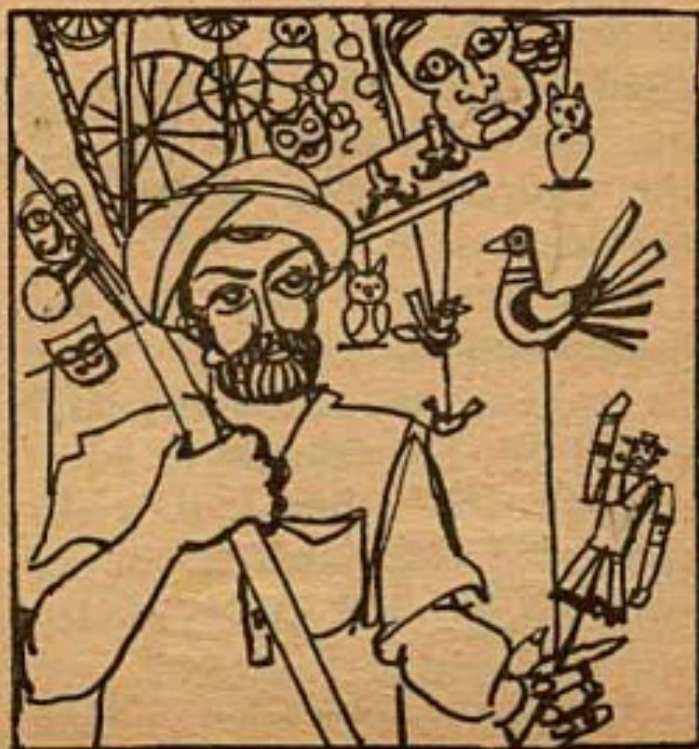
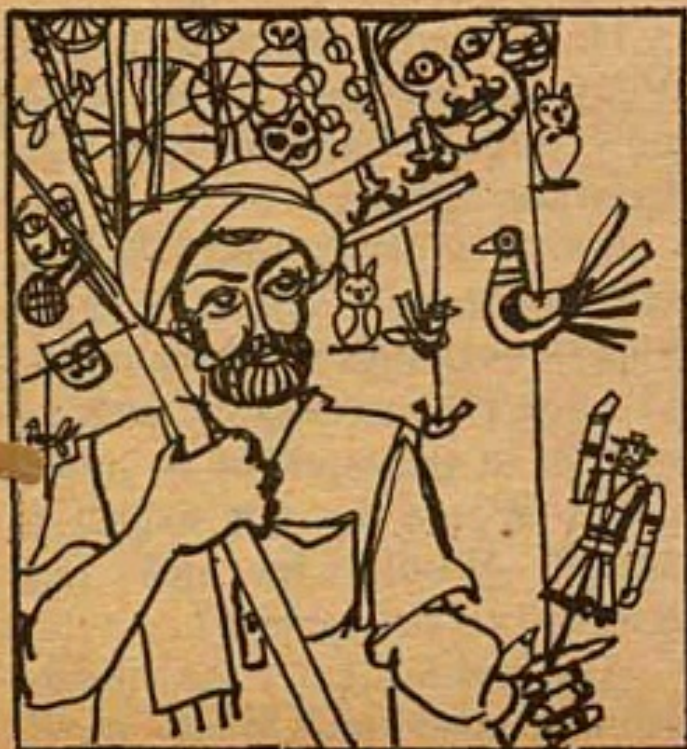
When you've lit both ends of the candle, you'll have to wait some moments before the 'see-saw' action really begins. This strange motion is

caused by the constant shifting of the centre of gravity as the candle burns away. The molten wax you'll collect on the newspaper will make an effective firelighter.



SPOT THE TEN DIFFERENCES

(Sorry, no clue anywhere in the Magazine)





EASY MONEY

Vijay and Ajay were two brothers. After the death of their parents they divided their ancestral lands between themselves. Vijay found joy in farming. But Ajay was different. He had no interest in cultivation. He wanted to earn more money, that too rapidly, and hence trade seemed to be the right sort of thing for him to do. He sold away his part of the property and shifted to another village.

Ajay opened a shop and did his business honestly. But soon he realised that dishonesty paid more! So, he resorted to adulteration and other foul tricks and soon gathered a lot of money. He changed his money into gold and was satisfied.

But a time came when a gang

of dacoits often raided the households in his area. The village he lived in was particularly exposed to such danger. In order to keep his box of gold out of the reach of the dacoits in case they invaded his house, Ajay carried the box one evening out of the village.

He wanted to deposit it with Vijay, his brother. Vijay being only a poor farmer, was safe from the dacoits.

But as soon as Ajay reached the border of Vijay's village, many misgivings beset his mind. Wouldn't Vijay become jealous of him at the sight of so much gold? Would he not expect a share? Would he not feel tempted to betray him?

Ajay did not enter the village. It was also unsafe to move

about with the box. In his anxiety to hide it, he dug a hole in a field and placing the box inside it, covered it with earth.

On returning to his shop, Ajay was shocked to find his shop and house completely ransacked by the dacoits. Several other households of the village too had been plundered. Ajay joined others in bemoaning their ill-luck. Then he started for the field to recover his box in order to give a fresh start to his business.

But a greater shock awaited him. He could not locate the spot where he had buried his box, however hard he tried.

Now he had no other way than to go to his brother and tell him that the dacoits had taken away all his wealth. His brother sympathised with him and granted him shelter.

A few days passed. Ajay was surprised to observe that Vijay was spending a lot of money giving charity to needy people. One day he asked Vijay, "Brother! I see you are spending money most liberally. How did you earn so much?"

Vijay smiled and said, "It is a strange story. I suddenly discovered some hidden property in my field. Look at this box. It contained a lot of gold, as mohurs and ornaments!"

Ajay recognised his box and sighed. But he could not say the truth. He had earlier stated that all his wealth had been looted. If now he claimed the box as his, Vijay might think that he was saying so out of greed. So he kept mum. Later Vijay helped him to buy some lands. He too became a farmer like Vijay.





THOSE WHO REVIVED A TIGER

Long ago, there were three young friends who studied together in the Ashram of a guru. They were very much fascinated by miracles and they studied and laboured hard to master the art of performing them. Time and again the guru warned the three against their pre-occupation with such occult arts, saying, "Try to be good, try to be wise and try to know what is truth. Miracles will never lead you anywhere near such goals."

But the guru's advice fell on deaf ears. The three friends, by the help of the rare books the guru had in his library, learnt to perform a variety of miracles and soon grew eager to show

their powers to the world and begged for the guru's leave for going on a tour of several lands.

"My dear boys! The time is not yet ripe for you to move about by yourselves," said the guru. But the young men replied, "We are grown up enough, O guru, to take care of ourselves. Please allow us to go. Our glory will soon reach your ears from all directions. And be assured that wherever we go we will introduce ourselves as your pupils and that would make you famous."

"Never mind my lack of fame," said the guru, "But if you are so eager to go, then take my servant Bhola with you. Treat him as one of you

and mind him if he ever cares to give you any advice."

The young men resented the guru's decision to send, of all persons, Bhola with them. He was an illiterate boy and the guru's instruction to treat him as their equal was a great blow to their pride. But they could not protest.

At last, out of the seclusion of the Ashram, they set out for the wide world. As they walked, the three scholars discussed of many important topics—of how to give a pair of wings to a frog, how to make a live snake out of a string, how to make ghosts perform a folk-dance and so on and so forth. Occasionally they cast looks of contempt at Bhola who walked by himself carrying their luggage.

The road led through a forest. At noon they sat down under a big tree and ordered Bhola to cook their lunch. But they would not just sit quiet! Once out of the Ashram after so many years, they had become curious about many things and were eager to excel each other in demonstrating their knowledge.

They spied upon some crumpled, scattered bones. One of the young scholars exclaimed,



"With the supernatural powers I have, I can bring all these bones together and reconstruct the complete skeleton. Then we can see whether it belonged to a man or an animal."

He uttered some hymns and sprinkled a little water on the bones and, lo and behold! there lay the complete skeleton of a big tiger.

They were excited. They danced around the skeleton and the second friend announced, "With the power I have, I can instantly endow it with blood, flesh and skin!"

Bhola who stood aloof and aghast, shouted, "Do not do

any such foolish thing! Wait for a more sensible occasion to demonstrate your powers!"

But the scholars were not in a mood to heed his advice. The second young man had already uttered his hymns and in a minute the bare skeleton flourished into a robust carcass.

"Now, do you wish to see what I can do? I can breathe life into it!" claimed the third scholar.

"Please do. It will make such a wonderful creature!" encouraged the other two.

"For heaven's sake, do not proceed further in this business!" shouted Bhola, "Remember, you have a long way to go. Haven't you promised to make our guru famous?"

"The tiger, once alive, will be so grateful to us! Before us, it will conduct itself like a pussy

cat, wagging its tail and licking our feet! How amazed the people would be when they see us patting and fondling such a wonderful pet!" the scholars discussed among themselves, in utter disregard of Bhola's warning.

Bhola lost no time in looking for a suitable tree. And no sooner had he climbed to its top than the tiger stood up, yawning and stretching its huge body. Then it gave out a lusty roar and instantly sprang upon the scholars who made its work easy, for they stood huddled together. It devoured them with what seemed to the shaking Bhola as a century's hunger.

After the tiger left the spot Bhola jumped down and ran and never stopped before he reached the Ashram. The guru, on getting his report, sighed and muttered, "Pity!"





STOLEN TWICE!

In a certain village lived two neighbours, Bhola and Niloo.

Niloo was richer between the two. That was the cause of Bhola's heart-burning. He was constantly trying to harass and humiliate Niloo.

One night Bhola hid whatever valuable things he had in his household in a dark nook of his house and then hurled a couple of his utensils into Niloo's compound. As soon as it was morning he wailed and shouted saying that he had been robbed of all his valuables.

Out of the things which Bhola claimed to have been stolen from his house, two items were found lying inside Niloo's compound. "Niloo is the thief," asserted Bhola. Since some lost property were found near

Niloo's house, the villagers easily believed in Bhola's accusation.

"I know nothing about it!" Niloo exclaimed. But who would believe him?

The villagers led both Bhola and Niloo to the village judge.

"Believe me, sir, I am absolutely ignorant of the theft," said Niloo humbly.

"How then could Bhola's utensils be found in your compound?" asked the judge.

Niloo had no answer to it.

After a pause, the judge said, "Give me some time to think about the matter. I will summon you later." The people dispersed.

The same evening Bhola had to leave for some distant village on business. His wife stayed

alone in the house. At midnight a gang of robbers ransacked the house and emptied the dark nook where Bhola had hid his property.

Early in the morning the villagers gathered there as Bhola's wife wept and shrieked, saying, "We have lost everything!"

When the news reached the judge, he rushed to the spot and asked for a list of things taken away by the robbers. When Bhola's wife submitted the list, he compared it with the previous list submitted by Bhola. Both the lists were same!

It did not take long for the judge to guess the truth. He told Bhola's wife, "Ask Bhola to meet me as soon as he returns."

Great was Bhola's shock

when he learnt about the theft on his return. All the things he had reported to have been stolen by Niloo had now been really stolen!

When Bhola met the judge, the latter said, "Is it not surprising that all your things which had already been stolen night before the last were stolen again last night? This means only one thing: There had been no theft in your house night before the last. You wanted to falsely accuse Niloo of theft. That was all!"

The judge then read out the punishment for Bhola: He must pay a heavy fine and leave the village within a week!

Bhola had planned to humiliate Niloo who was an innocent man. But now the humiliation was entirely his!





Long long ago, in the hilly region of Suvarnagiri, lived a *vanara* hero named Keshari. There were sixty thousand *vanaras*—beings with monkey like physique in the region over whom Keshari ruled.

The hero was rightly called Keshari, which meant lion, because he had killed two ferocious elephants named Samkha and Shavala which were harassing the sages of Prabhas, a holy place.

Keshari was not only a hero, but also he possessed a strong character. He practised celibacy and askesis and thereby cultivated many a rare virtue.

A demon named Shamvasadhan succeeded in pleasing

Brahma and obtaining a rare boon from the great God which enabled him to conquer all the three realms of the creation—the heaven, the earth and the *patala* or the netherworld. He became proud and arrogant and created troubles for sages and gods.

When the gods complained to Brahma about the menace that was the demon, He advised them to approach Keshari. The gods accordingly went to Suvarnagiri and met Keshari and requested him to stop the tyranny of Shamvasadhan.

In the meanwhile the sage Narada appeared before Shamvasadhan. The demon received him with respect and asked, "O



illustrious sage! What is the purpose of your visit? Are you out on some important mission?"

"Well, I happened to pass through Suvarnagiri. I was amazed to find there several gods. They were requesting a *vanara* hero to kill you. I thought it proper to inform you about it!" said Narada.

Shamvasadhan was terribly agitated at the news. He screamed, "If the gods are able to live, it is because I have spared their lives. But since they have mustered the audacity to conspire against me, I will destroy them in no time. That would

be a memorable lesson for others.

The demon took up his dazzling sword and still screaming, at once set out for Suvarnagiri.

At Suvarnagiri, the gods were panicky at the fast approaching screaming demon. They ran helter-skelter, trying to find shelter in caves and crevices.

The demon roared, "You can't escape, however you try. I have come here determined to finish you all!"

He was immediately confronted by Keshari.

"Fight with me, if you are so eager to fight," challenged Keshari.

"What! A mere *vanara* has the cheek to challenge me to fight!" shouted the demon as he raised his sword. Keshari hurled a giant rock at the demon. In return the demon hurled a mace at him. The mace struck Keshari's chest all right, but it was shattered to pieces. Without any loss of time, the demon then hurled a trident at him. Keshari caught it in the air and pressing it against his knee, broke it into two. Thereafter the demon tried to jump upon his adversary with his sword. But Keshari,





with his tail, gave such a lightning blow on the demon's wrist that the sword fell off his grip.

The demon thought it below his dignity to pick up the sword. He advanced barehanded to wrestle with Keshari. But the wrestling did not last long. With a few continuous blows, Keshari threw the demon flat on the ground.

The demon was dead. The gods were delighted. They told Keshari, "We bless you, you will be lucky in your wife!"

This gave Keshari the idea of marriage. He began to look for a suitable bride.

Ahalya, a woman created

by Brahma, had married Gautama, a sage. They had a charming little daughter named Anjana.

Anjana, in her previous birth, was a heavenly singer, Sukanthi by name. Once while roaming about in the Himalayas, she and her companions had happened to see a certain sage passing by. Sukanthi had laughed at him. That had made the sage quite angry. He had thrown a curse at her: "You will give birth to a *vanara* child in your next incarnation!"

A childless *vanara* named Kunjara satisfied Lord Shiva by his intense prayers. When Shiva appeared before him, he asked the compassionate God to grant him a child. But Shiva said, "My son! You cannot have a child of your own. But don't worry. A daughter will soon be available to you. In due course the daughter will give birth to a son of marvellous prowess and qualities."

Kunjara looked forward to the day when a daughter will come to him. At last Gautama brought Anjana to him and said, "Will you like to bring up this child?" Kunjara's joys knew no bound.

Anjana soon forgot all about her parents. She looked upon Kunjara as her father and his wife, Vidyavali, as her mother. They lived happily.

Years passed. When Anjana was of age, her foster-parents looked for a fit bridegroom.

Keshari heard about Anjana's beauty and virtues. He went to steal a glimpse of her. He was charmed to see her moving about inside the forest, her body radiating a golden aura. He felt that he would be fortunate if he could get her for his wife.

Anjana too saw Keshari and liked him. Of course, modesty did not allow her to say anything about it to her companions.

Keshari returned to his home and confided to his intimate friends his desire to marry Anjana.

"Kunjara is a noble soul. He is worthy of our reverence. We will meet him and propose your marriage with his daughter. Let us see how he reacts," said Keshari's friends.

Kunjara received Keshari's message with great joy. What could be a greater glory than having a hero like Keshari for one's son-in-law? Keshari



and Anjana were duly married.

But Anjana did not give birth to any child for a long time after their marriage. Both Keshari and herself resorted to several rituals with the design of having a child, but in vain. Anjana decided to pray to the god of wind for the boon of a child. Keshari approved of this and advised her to invoke the god at a place called Punjak. Accordingly Anjana sat there in deep meditation.

The god of wind was pleased with her. He quietly left a fruit in front of Anjana. The fruit contained the emanation of Lord Shiva. Anjana ate up



the fruit and soon she realised that she had conceived. A heavenly voice informed her, "Do not get perplexed. The fruit you took some time ago contained the emanation of Shiva and it had been left before you by the god of wind. The child that would soon be born to you would be a hero of untold gifts, for he would possess the strength of Shiva. Great would be his fame."

As soon as the voice ceased, the god of wind appeared before Anjana and advised her to return to her husband and to tell her all that had happened.

After the god had dis-

appeared, Anjana returned to her husband's place and told everything to Keshari. Keshari was immensely happy.

A few months later Anjana gave birth to a son. The gods rejoiced in heaven. A shower of flowers greeted the mother and the child. Keshari arranged for a festival.

Anjana left the child on a bed of leaves and went out for a while. The child was already hungry. He crawled out of the hut of his own and looked around. Just then the sun was rising above the eastern hills. The red round sun lured the infant. Taking it to be some wonderful fruit, the infant made a vault into the sky and flew towards it. Gods and Yakshas and angels around the sun were at their wit's end. They were afraid that a great crisis was about to befall the creation.

But the sun explained to those around him, "This infant is Anjaneya, the child of Anjana, possessing the strength of Lord Shiva. Great things are to be accomplished by him in future. He has mistaken me as a fruit and is coming to swallow me. However, there is no danger from him."

When the infant came nearer,



the sun felt a deep affection for him and reduced the heat emanated by himself. Anjaneya swallowed up him. But since he was so hot, the child brought him out. The child then tried again and again to swallow him and played with him enthusiastically.

That was a day of eclipse. Rahu was to gobble up the sun. But looking at Rahu coming towards him, the infant Anjaneya let out a terrific shriek. That scared Rahu and he took to his heels.

Rahu hurried to the court of Indra. The court was then in a gay spirit, with Bidyadhara singing and Tumvura and Narada playing their Veenas. Apsaras were dancing. Indra was seated

on his luminous throne. Rahu shouted at him, "You are engrossed in music and dance, eh? Don't you realise that things hitherto unheard of have started happening in the universe?"

"What do you mean?" asked the surprised Indra.

"According to the heavenly schedule, I was expected to swallow up the sun today. But on arrival there, I was taken aback to find a rival doing my work! If such is the new arrangement, what am I to do?" Rahu said in a gruff.

Indra was no less surprised. "I never heard of such a thing!" said he and instantly went out, carrying his thunder along, guided by Rahu, to see what the matter was.

If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people.

Virginia Woolf

WHO WAS THE FIRST MAGICIAN ?

Magic is a very ancient 'art'. Through the Ages, people have tried to control the force of Nature by means of charms and so on. For instance, sprinkling water to bring rain, or a dance imitating a hunt to bring about a successful hunt. But no one can say who the first magician was. Perhaps it was Merlin, the legendary wizard who was supposed to have been very active during King Arthur's reign. Story writers will tell you that Merlin was of 'demon' origin and made many prophecies about Britain. Mirrors, rings, wands and meaningless words are associated with magic.



WONDERS WITH COLOURS



PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Mr. Brahm Dev



Mr. N. Natarajan

- These two photographs are somewhat related. Can you think of suitable captions? Could be single words, or several words, but the two captions must be related to each other.
- Rs. 20 will be awarded as prize for the best caption. Remember, your entry must reach us by 28th February.
- Winning captions will be announced in APRIL issue
- Write your entry on a POST CARD, specify the month, give your full name, address, age and post to:

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MADRAS - 600 026.

Result of Photo Caption Contest held in December Issue

The prize is awarded to

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391 Mahalakshmi Layout

BANGALORE-22.

Winning Entry - 'With a Flowery Smile' - 'Over a Corny Pile'



True and False

Nilkantha and Mukund lived side by side. Mukund was a good-natured fellow. But Nilkantha was always jealous of his neighbour, Mukund.

Both had daughters of marriageable age. It was Mukund who first finalised the marriage of his daughter with an eligible bridegroom. The bridegroom's father did not put forward any demand regarding dowry. Whatever Mukund can give, that would do, he said.

After a few days Nilkantha too negotiated for his daughter's marriage with a gentleman who had a qualified son. The gentleman put forth the condition that the bride must be given a pair of diamond earrings.

Nilkantha agreed to the condition. But genuine diamond was too costly. He bought a pair of earrings made of imitation diamond and warned his wife not to divulge the truth.

But Nilkantha was very unhappy at the fact that Mukund was going to celebrate his daughter's marriage without the obligation to give any costly present. He one day met the father of Mukund's would-be son-in-law and whispered to him, "Brother! Why don't you demand a pair of diamond earrings for your son's bride from her father? Look here, I am Mukund's neighbour and as poor as him. But I am going

to give diamond earrings to my daughter!"

The suggestion worked. Mukund was informed that he would be required to decorate his daughter with diamond earrings.

Mukund felt very sad. He could not afford true diamond. So, he too purchased a pair of earrings made of imitation diamond.

In the meanwhile Nilkantha's wife wrote a letter to her brother, who was a rich man, saying how miserable she felt at having to adorn her daughter with false diamonds! Her brother at once sent her a pair of genuine diamond earrings. She

did not say anything about it to her husband, for, her brother and her husband were not in good terms. She quietly hid the imitation earrings and kept the genuine pair in its place.

When Nilkantha heard that Mukund had been obliged to buy diamond earrings, he was delighted. He thought that they must have been genuine. He carried the earrings meant for his own daughter to Mukund's house and told Mukund, "Brother! I hear that you have bought a pair of diamond earrings. I too have bought a pair. Can I see what you have bought?"

Mukund immediately brought



out the small casket. Nilkanth suddenly desired to drink water. While Mukund was away, he placed the earrings he had carried in Mukund's casket and shifted Mukund's pair to his own. How could he have imagined that he was giving away real diamonds for false ones?

The day of marriage came Nilkantha received the bridegroom's party with a great show of honour. But the party included a diamond expert who examined the earrings and declared that they were false!

Nilkantha blurted out, "How can that be? I have bought the same sort of earrings which Mukund bought!"

Mukund was summoned with his earrings. The expert examined them and said that they were genuine!

The father of Nilkantha's would-be son-in-law became furious. He was about to return without allowing his son to marry. But Mukund intervened, saying, "Have patience, sir, in fact it is I who had bought imitation earrings. They have been exchanged with Mukund's by mistake. Please take this pair. Let the marriage be performed."

Mukund's suggestion was accepted. The marriage took place duly.

When the father of Mukund's would-be son-in-law heard this, he was moved by his truthfulness. He withdrew his demand for diamond earrings.

So, both the girls were happily married.

Since that day Nilkantha was a changed man. He had nothing but respect and gratitude for Mukund.





GIVER OF DESTINY

A certain devotee of Brahma was one day worshipping the great lord. Just then the great lord was returning to heaven after writing the destiny of all the children who were born that day on earth. When the Lord saw his devotee, He made Himself visible to him and said, "I am pleased with you!"

The devotee was delighted and said gratefully, "Lord! I consider myself the luckiest man on earth, for, I have had a glimpse of you!"

"My child, that is all right. But ask me for a boon," said Brahma.

The devotee did not know what to ask for. He never ex-

pected to see his Lord so soon. He was almost in a daze.

Brahma asked again, "What, don't you have any need?"

The devotee thought for a minute and said, "When I would have a son, you would kindly allow myself to write his destiny on his forehead!"

Nobody had ever asked Brahma for such a boon. He wanted to ask His devotee to change his mind. But He thought that would be unfair to the devotee. So he kept quiet.

The devotee waited for the Lord's response. After a while Brahma said "All right. Let it be so."

The devotee went home satisfied. Days passed. A son was



born to him. He now got a chance to realise the boon he had received. He meditated on Brahma and prayed to Him, "O God, now let me write the destiny of my child!"

Brahma appeared before him and said "Let it be so," and then put His crown on the devotee's head.

The devotee prepared to write the destiny of his child according to his own sweet will. But as he was about to do so, suddenly innumerable children flashed before his eyes—all who were born all over the earth that day. He could not recognise his own child from amidst the thousands.

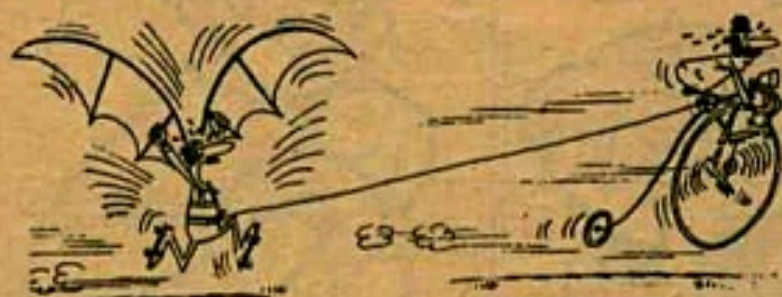
The devotee hesitated for a long time and then cried, "O lord! which one is my child?"

Brahma, who stood by his side, said, "You desired to take upon yourself one of my functions. Once I transferred my power to you, something of my consciousness too passed on to you. With that divine consciousness how can you differentiate between children?"

Brahma took back his crown and disappeared.

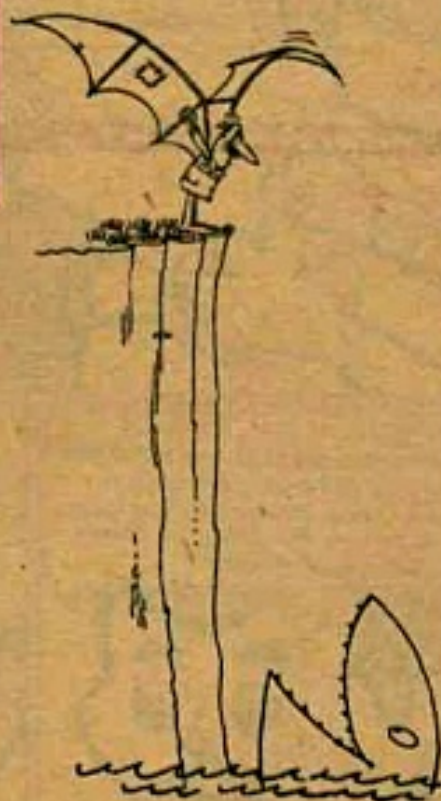
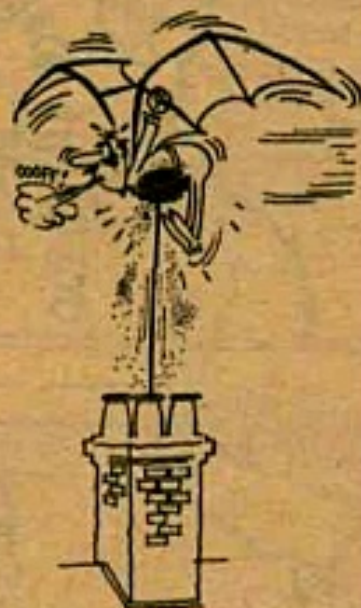
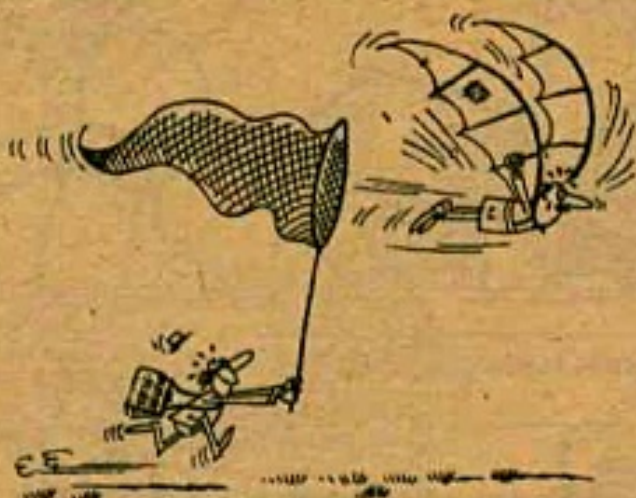
After the crown had gone the devotee had no difficulty in recognising his own child. But it was too late. He had no more the power to write the child's destiny himself.

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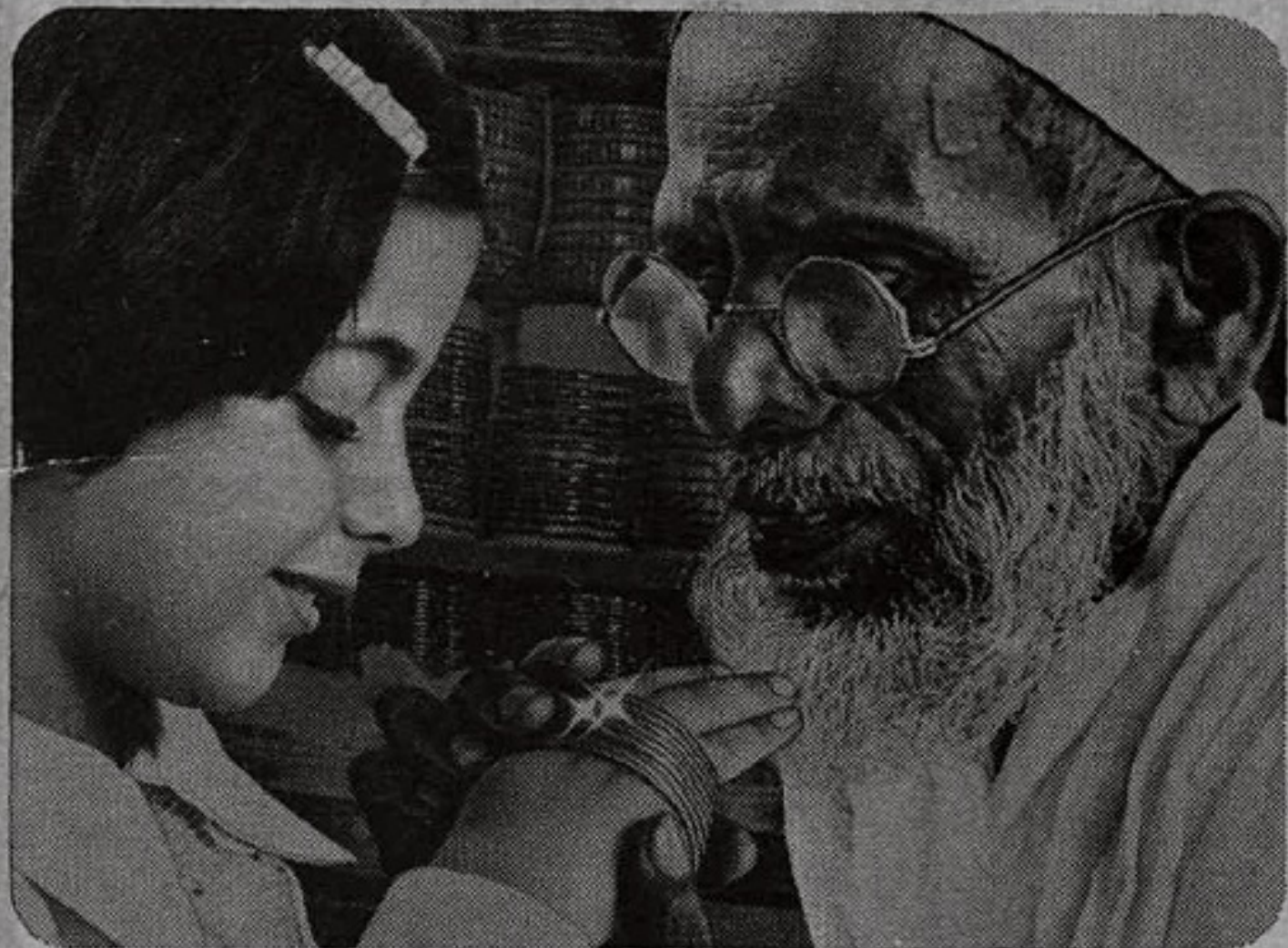


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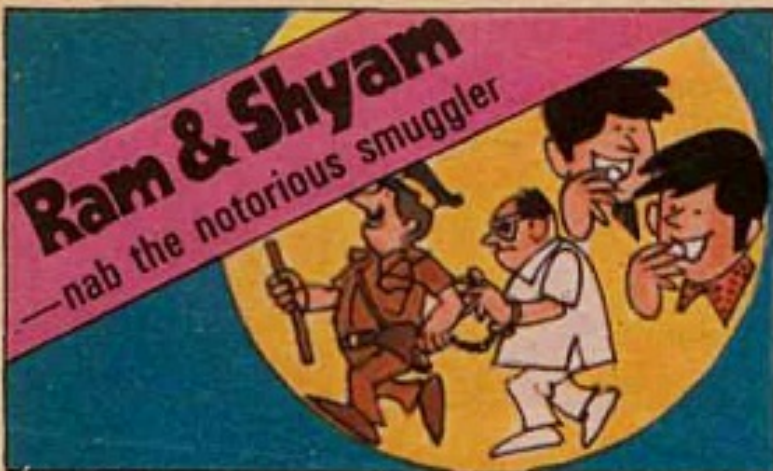
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